**Bramble Bears - Charging Policy**

**Policy Statement**

Please respect our charging policy, as the fees charged for Bramble Bears reflect the safe and stimulating environment the setting provides for children. They also ensure the continued high standards and sustainability of the Pre-School.

**Procedures**

**Fees**

Fees are charged on a sessional basis for any sessions booked that are not funded. Fees are currently £4.00 per hour. We do not offer a discount for siblings. Fees are reviewed annually at the AGM (or any other time should the committee see fit) and any increase is communicated to the parents via a letter with a month’s notice. No deposit is charge to secure places.

*Voluntary contributions*

We ask for a donation from ALL parents/carers of £15.00 per term to cover consumables and snacks. This contribution is voluntary and families are able to supply their own (carb snacks, paints, pens and paper) should they wish. Should you find it difficult to contribute this in one sum please speak to the Playgroup Leader who will be able to negotiate a payment plan.

**Swapping your child’s sessions**

In order to avoid the disruption of the pattern of continuity, the stability of the children and the staff:child ratios, temporary swapping of sessions within the setting cannot be accepted. If extra sessions are required (in addition to those booked), ad-hoc sessions will need to be booked. If you intend to swap your sessions on a long term basis, we require four weeks’ notice, in writing (an email is acceptable), however we will do our best to accommodate this (if spaces are available) as soon as possible.

Ad-hoc sessions can be booked (written/email confirmation required) where there is excess capacity and this differs each day. The sessions will be filled on a first come first served basis providing the correct staff: children ratios can be maintained. The ad hoc sessions will be charged at the usual session price. An invoice will be issued at the end of each month for any extra sessions you book for your child. If this becomes more regular you will be asked to commit to the session long term as with the other sessions you currently have.

**Notice periods**

Each term the playgroup leader will send a letter home for you to let us know the sessions your wish to have for the next term, this is done on a first come first served basis to increase sessions from what your child currently attends. To increase or decrease your child’s sessions Bramble Bears outside of this time, we ask for four weeks’ notice in writing (an email is acceptable), of your intention to increase or decrease your child’s sessions at Bramble Bears. We will do our best to accommodate this (if spaces are available) as soon as possible. Should you wish to withdraw your child from Bramble Bears, we require four weeks’ notice, in writing (an email is acceptable), of your intention to withdraw your child from Pre-School. You will be charged for your child’s booked sessions during the 4 week notice period.

**Payment options**

Fees can be paid by cash, cheque, by bank transfer or via an employer’s childcare voucher scheme. Fees paid by cash or cheque must be handed to the playgroup leader who will issue you with a handwritten receipt immediately, an additional detailed printed receipt will be raised by our treasurer.

**Booked Sessions**

Bramble Bears provides sessional day care on Monday, Tuesdays Wednesdays Thursday and Fridays between 9am and 3pm, using 3 and 6 hour sessions.

Childcare is booked by session a term in advance. Should you wish to remove your child from Bramble Bears we require 4 weeks notice. All booked sessions will be charged at a rate of £4 per hour with a minimum charge of £12 - 3hours - unless the child is claiming Early Education Funding (See below). Sessions are requested on registration by filling out the application to join and confirmed by the playgroup leader. These are reconfirmed every term by the Playgroup Leader with the offer of additional hours on a first come first serve basis.

**Late collection penalty charge**

If you are late collecting your child from Pre-School a late collection penalty charge of £25.00 will be applied at the committee’s discretion.

**Invoicing**

All families are issued with an invoice, unless the balance equals zero, on a termly basis. The invoice clearly states the number of morning and afternoon sessions charged for on each day and any funded hours claimed which reduces the total amount owed.

We request, for smooth running of the Bramble Bears, that these are paid within 14 days of the invoice date.

A reminder will be issued on the day the fees become overdue, followed by a final demand. Bramble Bears charges a late payment fee of £24 per day, should fees have still not been paid within 7 days an additional £25.00 administration charge will also be applied, and your child will not be able to attend the sessions (that are paid for) until the outstanding amount is paid ensuring no further debt will be allowed to build up.

If there is an issue with the payment of fees please speak to the Playgroup Leader who will liaise with the committee and we will do our very best to come to an agreement regarding payment. Confidentiality will be assured. The situation will be reported to the committee and a decision will be made as to the next steps to be taken e.g. court action. Should court action be required the family will be responsible for any additional charges incurred.

**Help with paying for your childcare**

You may be eligible for the following:

**Childcare tax credits**, if your child is not yet eligible for the free childcare entitlement and currently paying childcare fees, please note that you could be entitled to up to 80% of the cost back through Childcare Tax Credits based on your income. You will need to work at least 16 hours or more per week (for couples: if both parents work, one must work at least 16 hours with 24 hours between them, or one parent has to work 24 hours). For more information contact the Tax Credits Helpline on 0845 300 3900 (Open 8am-8pm 7 days a week) or visit www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxcredits.

**Childcare Vouchers,** if you are working, you could also get part of your childcare paid in childcare vouchers. Ask your employer if they are registered with a childcare voucher scheme and if not encourage them to contact the Family Information Service on 01603 222300 to request a free employers guide to childcare vouchers.

**Settling in Sessions**

Children will be offered 2 x 3hour long mandatory settling in sessions. These sessions are charged at a cost of £12 per 3 hour session. Any additional sessions are charges at a cost of £12 per session before any free entitlement is taken. These additional sessions are optional.

**Early Education Offer**

Bramble Bears offers:

- the 15 hour funded entitlement to eligible 2 year old children and their parents/ carers.

- the 15 hour and 30 hour entitlement to eligible 3 and 4 year old children and their parents/ carers. Three and four year old funding is available from the term after your child turns three.

This funding is **not** intended to cover the cost of meals, consumables, additional hours or additional services. Additional hours are charged our current hourly rate where not funded by Early Education Funding. (please see Fees section for information about contributions.)

The free entitlement from the government will be delivered consistently so that all children accessing the entitlement will receive the same quality and access to provision regardless of whether they opt to pay for additional hours, services or consumables.

As part of a funded 15/30 hour funded place, a setting is permitted to charge for:

- meals and snacks

- consumables such as nappies or sun cream

- services such as trips and yoga.

Any additional charges will be agreed with parents/carers before commencement. Parents can purchase additional hours of childcare and other services outside of their child’s funded hours. Purchasing these hours is not a condition of taking up the free entitlement.

If parents are unable or unwilling to pay any voluntary charge Bramble Bears will allow parents to provide their own meals and snacks/consumables / subsidise the cost of meals/ trips / etc…

Bramble Bears Playgroup is listed with Norfolk County Council as a provider offering the Early Education funding entitlement for 2 and/or 3 and 4 year olds, and has agreed to meet the requirements of the Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance (Mar 17), Operational Guidance (Apr 17) and Local Authority Funding Agreement (Sept 17 – Aug 18)

No top up fee will be charged to cover the difference between the setting’s hourly rate and the rate received from the Local Authority.

**For more information on eligibility and documentation please see our Admissions policy.**

**Fees payable**

Should the setting be open but parents/carers are unable to bring the child in (e.g. sickness): Full fees and/or funded hours will be claimed.

If you take holidays in term time when claiming funded hours, Bramble Bears is unable to claim funding for this time, therefore you will be invoiced for the hours missed (in line with current hourly rate).

Please let Bramble Bears know should your child be absent from the setting (either holiday or sickness etc.) by text/call to 07789055211 or email bbsupervisor01@gmail.com

**Emergency closure**

An emergency / short notice closure will be implemented in the following circumstances:

* When the building is unusable through accidental or malicious damage,
* Flooding,
* Bad weather,
* The breakdown of the heating system,
* When the building is unusable due to required maintenance work. Where possible we negotiate that scheduled work is carried out during times of closure,
* When an outbreak of illness within Bramble Bears community requires closure in line with Health Protection Agency (HPA) and Ofsted guidelines,
* When illness, accident or bereavement occurs within the staff body meaning it is impossible to maintain the correct ratios of suitable adults to children (and appropriate cover has been exhausted.),
* When an emergency occurs during the Pre School session which requires Bramble Bears to close early,

Should the setting be closed due to any of the reasons above: No fee will be charged and a refund offered. Funded hours will be offered at an alternative date or should this not be an option due to ratio/opening hour restrictions, this will be repaid to Norfolk County Council.

Refunds will only be given in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the committee.

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| **This policy was adopted at a meeting of Bramble Bears** |
| Held on: | To be reviewed: |
| Signed by: (PRINT) | Signature: |
| Role of Signatory: |